

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Rutland School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2002-2003**

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Dates of On Site Visit: September 23, 2002

Date of Report: September 30, 2002

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice

The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.

Meets Requirements The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.

Needs Improvement

The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left un-addressed may result in non-compliance.

Out of Compliance

The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.

Not Applicable

In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Child Find and Screening Articles
- Child Count
- Student File Reviews
- Parental Surveys
- Personnel Data
- In-Service Training Data
- Newsletter Announcements
- Placement Data Table (F)
- Exiting Information
- Budget Information
- Enrollment Table (E)

Meets Requirements

The Rutland School District's policies and procedures support the items listed under general supervision. The district's policies are consistent with Office of Special Education standards. The school district provides special education services to all eligible students within their school district. The district participates in child find and screening activities to identify students with special needs. Parents receive their due process rights and all parent referrals are followed by evaluation. The district has policies and procedures in place for making student referrals and all referrals are documented.

The Rutland School District has provided staff in-service training on pre-referral activities, educational interventions and referral procedures. The special education staff is certified and provided with training for working with students that have special needs. The district is implementing performance testing in accordance to Office of Special Education guidelines and information gathered from assessments is used to identify student progress.

The district has policies and procedures in place for the following: placement of students out of district, for students voluntarily placed in private schools and suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee stated that the staff needed more time to adequately analyze student progress. The district indicated that the dropout rate for special education students was not at 0% and this could be an area of improvement. The steering committee identified that parents do not always participate in the evaluation planning process. The committee also felt the district should implement parent, staff, and student advisory groups for special education programs.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team was in agreement with all the items presented by the steering committee in the meets requirements area.

Needs Improvement

The monitoring team agreed with the items listed by the steering committee in the category of areas that need improvement.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Student File Reviews
- Special Education Surveys
- Parent Rights Document
- Child Find Data
- Rutland School District's Policies
- State Suspension and Expulsion Data Table (C)

Meets Requirements

The Rutland School District's comprehensive plan has policies and procedures in place to ensure that a free appropriate public education is being provided to all students. The district provides parents with parental rights notice. The district provides policies and procedures for the suspension and expulsion of students and files suspension and expulsion records with the state.

The steering committee indicated that procedures are in place for child find activities, screenings, referral and the development of annual individual educational plans. These procedures ensure effective programming in meeting the student's needs. The district maintains data and accountability for the district's child count.

The staff is knowledgeable in techniques and methods to do positive remediation for disciplining of students. The staff is trained to write behavioral intervention plans and are knowledgeable in procedural safeguards.

Needs Improvement

The Rutland School District needs to collect information yearly for program improvement and modification.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team was in agreement with the items listed in the meets requirements area.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee stated that the district would be more effective if additional information was collected for making program modifications and improvements. The monitoring team was in agreement with their statement.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Teacher/Student File Reviews
- IEP Form
- Special Education Surveys
- Parental Rights Document
- Student Handbook
- Child Find Activities
- Personnel Training and Certification

Meets Requirements

The Rutland School District Comprehensive Plan has policies and procedures to ensure parental rights are in place and initial evaluations and reevaluations are made available to all students, who are suspected of a disability. The parental rights include written notice and consent to evaluate and parental input into the planning of evaluations.

The district's evaluation procedures include the following: comprehensive evaluation, the use of valid tests, tests that are administered by trained personnel, appropriate tests given, the student is evaluated in all areas of suspected disability, more than one evaluation instrument is utilized and the student is assessed in their native language or interpreter used if necessary.

Procedures are implemented to prevent racial or cultural discrimination. The district has procedures in place for English as a second language, but it is currently not applicable. The district utilizes evaluation results to determine eligibility and designs individual educational plans for eligible students.

The district's evaluations are completed within designated timelines and parents are provided with a copy of the test results.

Current evaluation practices include appropriate committee members, time lines, and reevaluation notices and reviews.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team found the school district to be utilizing valid assessments and trained personnel in providing evaluations. The district uses more than one instrument for evaluation of students.

The monitoring team could not validate that students were evaluated in all areas of suspected disability and that appropriate procedures for consent to evaluate were followed. The monitoring team has moved these items to the "out of compliance area"

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:30:17 Prior Notice Consent to Evaluate

The review team located two files where consent to evaluate was not obtained. In one file the student was given an evaluation in the area of motor skills, but no consent to evaluate was found. In another student file the student was given an adaptive behavior assessment, but parent consent was not obtained.

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures

The comprehensive evaluation must include functional evaluation. Upon review of five student files, no functional evaluation was included as part of the evaluation process.

Parent input into the planning of evaluations needs to be provided and documented in the student's file. The monitoring team found no documentation of parent input into the planning of student evaluations.

Parents of students being evaluated are to receive a copy of the student's evaluation reports. The special needs staff indicated reports are provided, but the review team could not locate documentation to validate this procedure.

ARSD

24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures

Issues requiring immediate attention:

The monitoring team validated that students were not evaluated in all areas of suspected disability. In one student file a student was determined eligible under the category of autism and upon re-evaluation the disability category was changed to the category of learning disability. The three-year re-evaluation did not include appropriate assessments to determine if the existing category was no longer appropriate. Through student file review it was evident that a student had difficulty with language, and should have been assessed in the area of oral expression and listening comprehension. The monitoring team could not validate that the students were assessed in all areas of suspected disability.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

- Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- In-Service Training Survey
- Teacher/Student File Review
- Special Education Surveys
- Prairie Lakes Educational Cooperative Handbook
- Parental Rights Document
- FERPA
- State Regulations
- Data Tables (L) and (M)

Meets Requirements

The comprehensive plan has policies and procedures in place to ensure procedural safeguards and parental rights are not violated. The Rutland School District comprehensive plan is approved by the state and follows both state and federal guidelines. The comprehensive plan includes policies in regard to examination of student records, parent participation in meetings and independent educational evaluation. The staff has had training to assist them in the development and implementation of procedural safeguards. The school district staff is encouraged to continue their education in the area of procedural safeguards. The school district provides parents and guardians with the parental rights document although some parents find it difficult to understand.

The district has policies and procedures in place to guarantee the child has been informed of transfer of parental rights a year before the student reaches the age of majority.

The school district has policies and procedures in place to handle formal complaints and due process hearings. According to the state data tables L and M there are no complaints or hearings filed.

The school district has policies and procedures for selection, training and administrative considerations regarding the appointment of surrogate parents for a child with a disability. The policy is in place, but there has not been a need to assign a surrogate parent.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team was in agreement with the statements in the meets requirements category.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Student File Reviews
- Special Education Surveys
- In-Service Training Data
- IDEA Regulation
- IEP Form

Meets Requirements

The Rutland School Districts has policies and procedures in place to meet the state and federal regulations in regards to developing an individualized educational plan for students with special needs.

The IEP includes all necessary information and appropriate team membership is present for IEP meetings. The district has policies and procedures in place to support the IEP team.

The district supports and encourages staff to attend workshops, training and classes to assist them in meeting the needs of the students. General education teachers would like more training to better meet the needs of students.

Needs Improvement

The district provides opportunity for training but should encourage general education staff to be trained to understand how they can help students on IEPs.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team validated that appropriate team membership is present for IEP Meetings and that the comprehensive plan includes district procedures and policies for implementing the IEP process. The school district has provided in-service for special and regular educators on topics impacting students with special needs.

The monitoring team could not validate that all the necessary information is present in the development of the student's individual program plan. The following IEP content areas have been placed in the "out of compliance area": present levels of performance, annual goals, short term objectives, related services and extended school year.

Needs Improvement

The review team was in agreement with the areas listed in the “needs improvement category”.

Out of Compliance

Issues requiring immediate attention

ARSD: 24:05:27:01.03

In four of five files reviewed the present levels of performance were missing required content. In two student files the present levels of performance were not skill specific and did not identify the student’s strength and weaknesses in his/her disability areas. In two other student files there was no statement as to how the student’s disability impacted their progress in the general curriculum and no parental input.

In one student file annual goal and short term objectives were not measurable. Example: “Student will interact appropriately with peers and adults”, the short-term objectives that followed were difficult to observe and no criteria is given for completion of the goal. In one student file counseling was agreed to as a related service, but no annual goal was written.

In the area of related services the files consistently did not indicate the location that services would be provided to the student. In one student file physical therapy was listed as a related service, but time and frequency was not specified.

Issues requiring immediate attention:

ARSD: 24:05:27:01.03

Through student file review and interview it was evident that counseling was stated as a related service but services were not being provided as stated in the IEP. One student file had present levels of performance in the area of behavior, but counseling was not listed as a related service.

Documentation of time, dates and location of counseling services being provided to students needs to be submitted as part of the Rutland School Districts Continuous Monitoring Improvement Plan for students who have counseling listed as a related service, since the students most recent IEP.

ARSD: 24:05:25:26 Extended School Year

In one student file the IEP indicated extended school year was to be determined, but there was no meeting held at a later date to determine the need for ESY.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Training Data
- Student File Reviews
- Special Education Surveys
- Pre-School Screening Information
- State Placement Data

Promising Practice

The Headstart Program and the Rutland School District have formed a collaborative partnership in providing early childhood education to all children in the community, including students with special needs.

Meets Requirements

The district has policies and procedures in place to provide students with services in the least restrictive environment. Students are placed in the least restrictive environment based on their individual program needs and the continuum of services. The general educational curriculum/instructional materials have been modified and made available to regular education teachers to assist students with special needs in the general education program.

The special education staff has been trained to implement behavioral intervention plans and behavioral planning is being implemented consistently throughout the district.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

The monitoring team validated that the collaborative partnership between the Headstart Program and the Rutland School District provided a growth opportunity for early childhood education to all children in the community, including students with special needs.

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team was in agreement with the items listed in the area of meets requirements.